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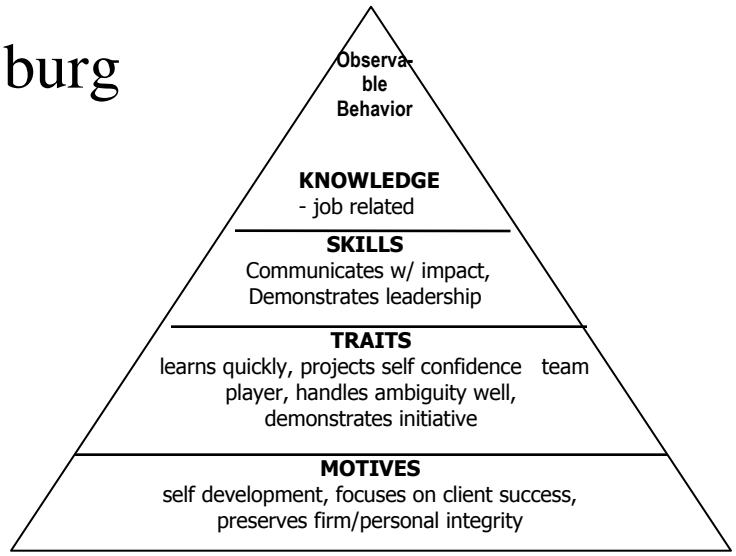
Leadership Competency Series

Competency Based/Behavior Based Interviewing

The Past as Guide to Future

Behavioral interviewing predicts 55% of future on-the-job behavior, while traditional interviewing can predict 10%.

Behavior Ice-burg



Getting the right talent, more than ever, is critical today. In recent years, employers have been using "behavior based" interviewing techniques, a relatively new mode of job interviewing, to achieve more accurate, 'position-person-nearest-fit'.

Applicants generally try to put their best foot forward and make a good impression on interviewers. They all hope to "win" the job by talking about what they would do if selected, the problems they could solve, skills they would develop and they might even describe the knowledge, skills, or abilities they would put to use on the job. This positive-sounding information, may lead the interviewer to believe that the applicant is more skilled than he or she actually is. Behavioral Event Interview prevents macro personal impressions affecting objective evaluation. Thus, applicant "faking" is greatly reduced. Applicants are

pinned down to explain exactly what they did, not what they know about, would like to do, or would do in the future. BEI makes an applicant talk "facts".

BEI process is a structured series of questions designed to examine a person's past behavior in situations similar to those on the job. It is based on the assumption that the **best predictor of future performance is knowing the past performance** in similar circumstances. It provides a more objective set of facts to make employment decisions than other conventional interviewing methods.

Competency-based approaches grew out of job-performance research from the 1970s. Harvard University psychologist David McClelland developed the Behavioral Event Interview (BEI) technique. The basic step starts by studying the high-performing staff to obtain detailed descriptions of professional successes and failures. It is a comparison of people who are *clearly successful* in jobs, roles, or life outcomes of interest with the persons who are *less successful,* in order to identify those characteristics associated with success. Next step is to identify operant thoughts and behaviors *causally* related to these successful outcomes. The best predictor of what a person can and will do is what he/she spontaneously thinks and does in an unstructured situation—or has done in similar past situations.

"Tell me about a time when you were on a team, and one of the members wasn't carrying his or her weight." If this is one of the leading questions in a job interview, one could be in for a BEI. In BEI, the questions are selected based on the essential and function competencies selected for the position, deriving from the competency model adapted. For this question, a reasonable answer could be: "I had been assigned to a team for an important project. One of our team members wasn't showing up for the sessions or doing his assignments. I finally met with him in private, explained the frustration of the rest of the team, and asked if there was anything I could do to help. He told me he was preoccupied with another job that he wasn't passing, so I found someone to help him with the other course. He not only was able to spend more time on our project, but he was also grateful to me for helping him out. We finished our project on time". The next step might then to probe: "How did you feel when you confronted this person?" "Exactly what was the nature of the project?" "What was his responsibility as a team member?" "What was your role?" "At what point did you take it upon yourself to confront him?"

In the BEI there is little scope for make up or "shade" information, since it unveils the element of why 'you should have a clear memory of the entire incident', thus cascades on to applicant's past behavior patterns.

Behavioral Vs. Traditional Interviews

In the Behavioral Interview, the focus is on asking 'how did you behave then' rather than 'how would you behave in a particular situation'. It is probing, peeling the layers from an onion. Here the interviewer will ask candidate to provide details than allowing the candidate to generalise about events. Interview will be more structured to concentrate on areas that are important to the

interviewer, rather than allowing candidate to concentrate on areas that he/she may feel are important.

Conventional interview questions such, as "Tell me about your strengths and weaknesses" will not have a place in BEI. Balancing/prioritizing several tasks within a short period of time, dealing with an unproductive or uncooperative colleague are some examples of situations that may provoke desired behaviors.

BEI typical questions for an entry-level candidate.

A candidate here has no previous related experience. The interviewer normally looks for behaviors in situations similar to those of the target position:

"Describe a major problem you have faced and how you dealt with it."

"Give an example of when you had to work with your own hands to accomplish a task or project."

"What kind of people did you like the most? What did you like about it?"

Follow-up questions will test for consistency and determine whether candidate exhibited the desired behavior in that situation:

"Can you give me an example?" "What did you do?" "What did you say?" "What were you thinking?" "How did you feel?" "What was your role?" "What was the result?"

In a traditional job-interview, one can usually get away by telling the interviewer what he or she wants to hear, even if you are fudging a bit on the truth. In a behavioral interview, however, it's much more difficult to give responses that are untrue to your character. When you start narrating a behavioral story, the behavioral interviewer typically will pick it apart to try to get at the specific behaviors. He will probe further deeply calling for details. If the story that's anything but totally honest, the response will not hold up through the barrage of probing questions.

Behavioral interviewing is designed to minimize personal impressions that can affect the hiring decision. By focusing on the applicant's actions and behaviors, rather than subjective impressions that can sometimes be misleading, interviewers can make more accurate hiring decisions. Using the STAR Technique the BE interviewer will ask questions using these following components. What was the **S**ituation involved? What was the **T**ask needed to accomplish? What **A**ction(s) taken? What **R**esults achieved?

Today, BEI technique is used by many of the world's leading companies particularly those with a high reputation of an emphasis on excellence in leadership development.

Factors evaluated in BEI

Generally in BEI, managers evaluate a candidate's experiences and behaviors to determine the applicant's potential for success. The interviewer identifies job-related experience, behaviors, knowledge, skills and abilities that the company has decided are desirable in a particular position. Specifically employers look for some of the characteristics like, critical thinking, being a self-starter, willingness to learn, willingness to travel, self-confidence, teamwork, professionalism etc.

Sample BEI probes	
Competencies	***Probes***
Communication	Narrate that time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person, even when that individual may not have personally liked you.
Decision Making	Describe a specific problem you solved for your employer. How did you approach the problem? What role did others play? What was the outcome?
Time Management	Tell me about a time when you failed to meet a deadline. What things did you fail to do? What were the repercussions? What did you learn?
Planning	Describe a situation when you had many projects due at the same time. What steps did you take to get them all done?
Interpersonal SKills	Describe a situation in which you were able to effectively "read" another person and guide your actions by your understanding of their needs and values.

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